

TURF TWISTERS

AVOIDING COMPLICATIONS

Question: Last fall an application of lime was made to our fairways. We waited a few days before applying a fertilizer. The grass plant then became weak and, in some areas, failed to survive. What happened? (Michigan)

Answer: At least one week must elapse between applying hydrated lime and a fertilizer containing nitrogen in the form of ammonia. When the two are mixed, they react instantly to form and release free ammonia gas. Free ammonia gas is very toxic to grass. Next time use ground limestone, especially the dolomitic type. It is safer and the rate of reaction is slower. However, still allow a week between applications to avoid complications.

THE NEW RYEGRASSES

Question: I read and hear a lot about the new, improved perennial ryegrasses (*Lolium perenne*). What have your observations been? (Arizona)

Answer: All good to-date! We have seen Pennfine, Manhattan and the Medalist types and there is much to be enthusiastic about. They seem to take traffic exceedingly well (wear areas near tees, greens, etc.), seem to tolerate at least a 3/4-inch cutting height where needed, have some shade tolerance and apparently a fairly wide soil moisture and temperature range. In some areas, they're also making a permanent (3 yrs. to-date) compatible warm season-cool season turf combination with common bermudagrass.

REGARDING THATCH

Question: Everyone talks about thatch, but I've never really heard a precise definition of the word as it relates to turf-grass management. Can you give me one? (Washington)

Answer: "Thatch," as defined by the Turfgrass and Crop Terminology Committee of the American Society of Agronomy is, "a tightly intermingled layer of living and dead stems, leaves, and roots of grass, which develops between the layer of green vegetation and the soil surface." Hope that helps!